

## Bluffed

By ELIAS LISLE

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Weariness had overtaken the junior partner. It had been a hard day. Gold and bonds in three separate and vast consignments had come in late—too late for deposit. For the night nearly a million dollars must remain in the office safe. The unexpected influx had kept the junior partner later than usual, for he was a master of the detail of his office. For a time he debated establishing an extra guard at the office, but gave over that idea. Special precautions would arouse talk, and there were business reasons for keeping the matter quiet. Anyway, the burglar alarm system and the special watchman were sufficient guarantee of safety. So the junior partner leaned back in his easy office chair and closed his eyes for a moment.

"Anything more, Mr. Franklin?" asked the senior bookkeeper from the inner office, where the big safe was kept.

"No. Has every one gone?"

"Every one but you and me, sir," replied the other with the exact particularity of language which is the result of long years spent over ledgers.

"Good night, then. I shall be coming along in a few moments."

It seemed a very few moments after the door had closed on the head bookkeeper when Franklin opened his eyes again. He swung forward in his chair, dazed, for darkness was about him. Consciousness, dragging itself slowly from the cloying sands of sleep, struggled with vague uncertainties. The flicker of an electric light from Wall street, seen through a distant window, helped the junior partner to recall himself to realities. He half turned, and in that instant was wide awake, for a harsh, startled voice outside said:

"What's that?"

"Shut your head," piped another voice in a high, piercing tone instinct with savageness. "You didn't hear anything."

"Maybe 'twas somethin' outside. Where's the light?"

"Don't open up too wide, you fool," warned the high voice as a band of light appeared and broadened through the darkness.

Sitting motionless as stone, Franklin heard the men moving along the outside partition until they reached a point opposite him. There was a fumbling at the door, which was fastened by a spring lock.

"Hold on," said the gruff voice. "Let's climb over the partition."

"Climb over nothing!" retorted the other voice angrily. "Going out to look for a ladder, I suppose. D'you think we got all night to waste?"

"You said the watchman was doped for two hours."

"What's two hours to a bungling fool like you up against a good safe?"

"You gimme an hour at this safe, and I'll make a wide open New York of it," said the gruff voice confidently.

"Open up that door first, then," said the other.

"That's all right, but every time I tackle a door I think of that burglar alarm we run against in Steyn's jewelry store."

"We ain't goin' to run against any alarm here. Didn't I tell you I squared the janitor's assistant and fixed the wires in the cellar?"

"Well, there might be—"

"Well, there ain't," broke in the other furiously. "Cut it out! D'you think you can teach me anything about any kind of wires, alarm or telegraph, or anything else? Haven't I been everything from lineman to operator, and didn't I run the wire tapping outfit that bilked the poolrooms last year?"

"Hold the light here, then," growled the confederate. "The lock's dead easy."

During this conversation Franklin sat paralyzed at his desk. Any resistance that he could put up against the robbers would be almost useless. He had never kept a revolver in his desk and was accustomed to deride mildly the more cautious men of his acquaintance who always kept a loaded weapon at hand. Now he cursed himself for neglecting this precaution, recalling a saying of a western friend:

"You don't want a gun very often, but when you do want it you want it bad."

The entrance of the robbers meant ruin to him and to his firm. How easy the safe would be for them he knew better than they, for the heavy door had been left open at his orders that he might put some papers in it before closing. On any other night the safe would have been closed. But this night, of all others, the junior partner had fallen asleep at his post, and not only he himself, but a thousand innocent people, whose interests were bound up in the house, were to suffer the penalty. Well, he would at least do what he could to save them, though it were at the forfeit of his own life.

A wild idea of smashing his window and shouting for help he put aside. To send one's voice ringing up and down an empty shaft, bordered by vacant windows, would be a cheerless performance and prodigal of breath that he might need later on.

Then it came to his mind that his paper cutter was a Malay creese, small, but keen and strong. Armed with this he could creep over to the door and when it opened stab at least one of the invaders. Undoubtedly the other would shoot him, but that didn't much matter, and possibly the second man might not care to wait for loot under the circumstances. Sliding his hand along in search of the weapon, he touched with an exploring finger the spring lock of

his desk. It gave a little and flew up with a metallic click. Like a flash the thought of how he had in idle moments sat there and with his pencil shaft on the lock ticked off Morse code messages to nowhere, joined with the memory of what the high voice had said as to its owner's telegraphic acquisitions, and the two ideas coalesced in a well defined hope. As an operator the junior partner was somewhat rusty, and as an instrument the spring lock was only a fair tonal imitation. But it was a chance—the best one in sight and as such to be seized. Franklin seized it.

At the first accidental click the fumbling at the door had ceased.

"There's somebody in there," growled the harsh voice, quavering throatily. Evidently its owner was in a tremulous state of mind. There was nothing tremulous about his partner.

"In your mind," he snarled. "If there is, I've got a bullet for him—and my knife for you, you sniveling whelp, if you don't brace up," he added in a frenzied squeal.

"Don't," gasped the other. "I'll go on, I'll go on."

"Tick-tick, tick; tick-tick, tick; tick-tick, tick," sounded clear through the darkness.

"There!" chattered the man who was working on the door. "Did you—did you—What was it?"

There was a period of silence, broken only by the sharp clicking.

"It's a telegraph call; that's what it is. I don't have to be an operator to know that." The quavering voice was answering its own question.

"It couldn't be." There was not the fierce assurance in the piping voice now that there had been. "It don't sound like any instrument I ever heard. Oh, I know!" Relief was evident in the tone, and a correspondingly sickening feeling rose in the junior partner's chest. "It's one of those stock tickers working overtime. You ain't going to let a thing like that?"

"You said you'd cut the wires," growled the other voice. "You lied to me. I ain't goin' to stay. Aggh! Leggo my throat!" The growl had suddenly been compressed to a wheezing squeal.

"Open up that door or I'll strangle you!" The piping voice had a wild beast note in it now.

The fumbling at the door was resumed. Franklin could hear the lock sliding. Doggedly he kept on with his pencil, spelling out his faked message.

"Tick-tick, tick, tick-tick, tick-tick-tick. Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick."

"It's a message." The high voice was shriller than ever. "Send send send help!" A high pitched, savage oath rang in the air. "Cut it, Dutch. He's got a private wire there."

The junior partner got to his feet, pressed a button and leaped upon his desk. In the flood of light that he had turned on he could see over the partition a tall, thickset fellow leading a little, wiry, redheaded man in a race to the outer door. There the little man, half turning, saw him.

"Ah, you would!" he screamed furiously. "Take that!"

His revolver spurted flame. There was a crash of glass, and Franklin jumped to the floor unharmed. Across the office he raced, threw up a window and sent his voice ringing out between the high buildings of the street.

"Around in Broad street!" he called as tramping feet answered his shouts and the dark figures of two policemen appeared.

Then he went back, closed the safe, seated himself at his desk and wrote busily. When the detectives from the police station came in, breathless, he handed a slip of paper to each.

"There's the best description I can give of the men," he said. "You can read it as you run."

**Sandstorms.**

Sand and dust whirls occur in arid regions in hot weather. They may be anywhere from a rod to several rods in diameter and from twenty to a thousand feet high. They are sometimes compound, a score or more small whirls forming a whirling circle around a common center. They are very common in India. They sometimes carry up so much sand in the Sahara and Arabia that those on whom the sand falls are overwhelmed. They occur also in the arid regions of the United States.

In the Magdalena valley, across the mountains westward from Socorro, in New Mexico, during a hot day in summer they form at the head of a valley in a long, slender, vertical column perhaps 600 feet high and then travel down the valley toward the village of Magdalena, over which they burst sometimes, bringing little puffs of contrary winds and a shower of fine dust. In some places a group of stationary whirls of the same general character as the preceding is tied down to one point. Such are the whirls which form sometimes over volcanoes.

**Bigger Than the Sun.**

A minute parallax of about one-sixtieth of a second of arc found for Arcturus by Dr. Elkin gives a most astounding result. This small parallax implies a distance from the earth equal to about 12,000,000 times the sun's distance. This vast distance would produce a diminution of light of about 35% magnitudes, so that the sun placed at the distance of Arcturus would be reduced to a star of only 9% magnitude! It would not be visible with an opera glass! Arcturus is therefore in round numbers 9½ magnitudes, or over 6,000 times brighter than the sun would be at the same distance. Assuming the same density and brightness of surface as the sun, the diameter of Arcturus would therefore be about seventy-nine times the sun's diameter, or over 68,000,000 miles, and its mass about 500,000 times the mass of the sun—figures well calculated to "stagger the imagination."—Gentleman's Magazine.

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### SCOTLAND'S CROWN.

The Precious Relic Still Kept in the Castle of Edinburgh.

A once precious diadem, which is now only a historic relic of much interest, is the ancient crown of the Scotch kings kept in the castle of Edinburgh. It is supposed to have been made for Robert Bruce and is formed of two circles of gold, the upper and narrowest circle being surmounted by a row of crosses and gem incrustated imitation flowers. The lower ring, the headband proper, is adorned from end to end of the golden band with large precious stones of different kinds, mostly in their rough, unpolished state. Above rise two arches of gold, which unite and are surmounted with the historic "cross and ball." Even when the Stuarts became kings of England they went to the trouble of going to Scotland to seat themselves for a few moments upon the celebrated "stone of scone" and to have King Bruce's diadem pressed upon their royal heads.

Charles I. declared his intention of removing Scotland's famous relic to London so that such ceremonies could be carried out at home, but the sturdy Scots soon convinced him that such a proceeding would be an infringement upon their rights, so the king had to go to Edinburgh, as others had done before. The wife of a preacher of the name of Granger once stole the Scotch crown and the other royal insignia, this in 1652 or 1653. At the time of the restoration they were transferred to Charles II. They were returned to Edinburgh castle in 1707.

### WILD DOGS OF ASIA.

Fierce Animals That Pursue and Kill Bears and Tigers.

The quality of courage possessed by hunting dogs of Asia appears in a marked difference of habit from that noticeable in all other carnivorous beasts. As a rule, each ferocious animal has its natural and favorite prey, which may vary in different localities, but is in each case the easiest and most profitable victim. Tigers, for instance, are cattle slayers or deer killers just as cattle or deer happen to be most abundant in their district.

Leopards prey on goats, sheep and, when they can get them, on tame dogs; wolves on sheep and cattle, stoats or rabbits and hares, and weasels on rats and mice. But, though the jungles which they visit abound in defenseless animals, the wild dog does not limit his attacks to these. The packs deliberately pursue and destroy both the black and Himalayan bears and the tigers, affording perhaps the only instance in which one carnivorous species deliberately sets itself to hunt down and destroy another. From their rarity, the uninhabited nature of the jungles which they haunt and their habit of hunting at night—which a probable suggestion makes the basis of the early legends of the demon hunter and "hellhound" at a time when the "red dogs" still remained in Europe—observations of their habits are rare.—London Spectator.

### The Despised Left Hand.

The despised left hand makes good its claims in many cases to be the defter of the two. The fingers that touch and adjust with such nicety the strings of the violin are surely as cunning as those that move the bow. The hand that guides the reins and steers with exactness the horse through the crowded streets is quite as cunning as, one might say much more than, the hand that wields the whip. But great is fashion; unanswerable is theory.

It would appear that as life becomes more and more complex we are becoming more and more specialized, and the difference between our limits is encouraged rather than hindered by every screw made in Birmingham and every slap administered to the offending fingers that would dare to shake hands incorrectly.—Chambers' Journal.

### Betrothals in Germany.

When a maiden is betrothed in Germany she is called "bride" by her sweetheart, who addresses her thus until it becomes time to call her "wife." Immediately upon betrothal the lovers exchange rings, which, if the course of true love runs smooth, are to be worn ever afterward until death parts them. The woman wears her betrothal ring on the third finger of her left hand until she is married, and then it is transferred to the third finger of her right hand. The husband continues to wear the ring just as the wife wears hers when she was a "bride," so that one can tell easily at a glance if a man be or be not mortgaged, as to his affections.

### The Snow Leopard.

In the highlands of central Asia lives the snow leopard, which never descends below the snow line of the mountains. Its color is a gray, inclining to buff. A few large dark spots show about the lower parts and a number of smaller ones congregate about the head and the neck. The back and the sides are marked with faded looking brown rings or rosettes. The comparatively enormous tail of the animal is fully as long as its body.

### A Night Mare.

"Look here, you old fraud, that mare you sold me is blind as a bat."

"Well, well! Ain't it funny I never found that out? Ye see I allow used to drive her after dark, an' then she could see as good as any other hoss."

### Refined.

Mrs. Nurich—I think I'll take this watch. You're sure it's made of refined gold. Jeweler—Certainly. Mrs. Nurich—Because I do detest anything that ain't refined.—Philadelphia Ledger.

In this world it is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich.—Bretcher.

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